

North Carolina Minority Health Facts

African Americans

Office of Minority Health and State Center for Health Statistics

July 1998

African-American health status is improving, but disparities persist.

African Americans¹ are the second largest racial group in North Carolina. One out of every five of the state's 7.3 million residents is Black, or about 9 out of every 10 minority residents. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, approximately 1.6 million African Americans lived in North Carolina in 1996, compared to 1.5 million in 1990.²

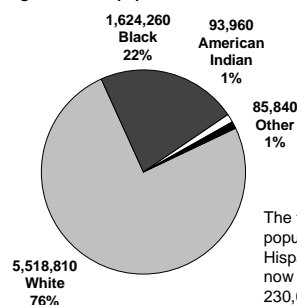
Overall, according to Census information, African Americans in North Carolina have lower income, education and employment levels than White North Carolinians and are less likely to have health insurance, factors which can adversely affect health status.

African Americans suffer higher death rates from nearly all major causes. Although the health status of the Black population in North Carolina has been improving in some areas, research shows a widening gap between Black people and White people in illness from asthma, diabetes, major infectious diseases and several forms of cancer.³ African Americans often receive less, and poorer quality, health care than White Americans, so they tend to become sicker and die earlier than Whites. In addition to factors such as economic status and educational levels, researchers are finding growing evidence that race, discrimination, and social and cultural factors influence the care people receive and, consequently, their health.³

African Americans born today have a life expectancy of about 70, typically dying six or seven years earlier than White Americans. The age-adjusted death rate for North Carolina's African Americans was slightly lower in 1996 than in 1990, but was still more than 1½ times the 1996 death rate for White North Carolinians. This means that, in general, African Americans in each age group are dying at higher rates than Whites in the same age groups.

1996 NC Population Estimates by Race

(percentages based on population distribution at time of 1990 U.S. Census)



The total estimated 1996 NC population is 7,322,870. The Hispanic/Latino population, now estimated at 135,000 to 230,000 or more, is included primarily in the "White" and "Black" race categories.

Leading Causes of Death for Black Males, 1996

	Number	Age-Adjusted Rate/100,000
■ Heart Disease	2,095	275.5
■ Cancer	1,785	241.7
■ Unintentional Injuries	506	69.1
■ Stroke	535	68.5
■ AIDS	430	59.4
■ Homicide	282	40.0
■ Diabetes	242	33.2
■ Pneumonia, Influenza	240	28.1

Leading Causes of Death for Black Females, 1996

	Number	Age-Adjusted Rate/100,000
■ Heart Disease	2,095	144.6
■ Cancer	1,457	125.7
■ Stroke	760	49.2
■ Diabetes	393	31.3
■ Unintentional Injuries	240	24.8
■ AIDS	140	16.2
■ Pneumonia, Influenza	174	11.0
■ Homicide	85	10.2

¹ The terms African American and Black have been used interchangeably in this report.

² PPL-50. U.S. Bureau of the Census. Population Division. Administrative Records and Methodology Research Branch.

³ The New York Times wire reports, January 26, 1998.